



SOUTH AFRICAN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE
SUID-AFRIKAANSE KOMPREENSIEWE ASSESSERINGSINSTITUUT

**NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION GUIDE**

2026



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1. WELCOME

Welcome to the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations and Assessments.

We are pleased that you are part of the SACAI community.

As a registered institution, you play a vital role in ensuring that the National Senior Certificate examinations are credible, fair, and in line with national standards.

Without your commitment, it would be impossible to successfully administer examinations that meet the integrity requirements set by Umalusi, the NSC policies and regulations, and SACAI.

This Examination Guide is your reference manual. It provides practical information on the examination cycle, centre management, registration, invigilation, marking, moderation, and certification.

This guide is designed to support you in every step of the examination process.

For more information, please visit our website: www.sacai.org.za

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC)

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) is a Level 4 qualification on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It is a three-year qualification with 130 credits. It represents the successful completion of schooling at the Further Education and Training (FET) band and is the primary school-leaving qualification in South Africa.

SACAI is an accredited assessment body with Umalusi and conducts external NSC examinations for private institutions and distance education providers.

Purpose of the NSC Examinations

The purpose of the external NSC examinations is to:

- Assess learner competence in each subject in accordance with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R–12;
- Provide valid, fair, and reliable results that reflect each learner’s achievement; and
- Facilitate progression into higher education, training, or employment.

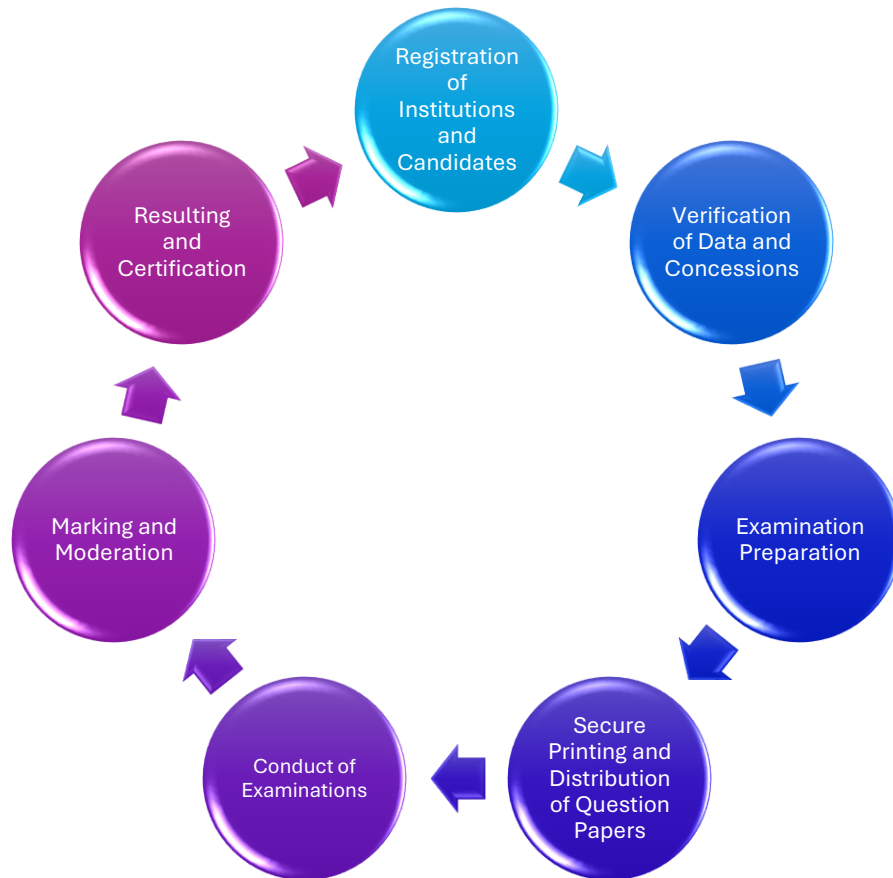
Principles Guiding the NSC Examinations

SACAI’s NSC examinations are guided by the following principles:

- **Validity:** Assessments measure what they intend to measure.
 - **Reliability:** Consistent results are achieved under consistent conditions.
 - **Integrity:** Honesty and transparency throughout all processes.
 - **Fairness and Absence of Bias:** Equal opportunity for all candidates.
 - **Accountability:** All role-players accept responsibility for their roles.
 - **Credibility:** The assessment system upholds national standards.
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3. SACAI EXAMINATION CYCLE OVERVIEW

The administration of NSC examinations follows a clear and structured cycle to ensure the integrity and efficiency of the process.



Each phase involves checks, verifications, and approvals in line with SACAI’s Examination Management Plan (EMP) and Umalusi requirements.

4. EXAM REGISTRATIONS

The examination timetable

We publish the final timetable by 31 May of each year. Please visit our website for more information. SACAI, as an independent assessment body, has full autonomy over the development and administration of its respective examination timetables. As such, SACAI does not align its timetable with that of the DBE or the IEB, nor can we be held responsible for clashes that occur when a candidate is registered to write subjects with more than one assessment body.

In the event of timetable clashes, SACAI will not make changes or provide alternative examination dates, as the examination timetable is approved, standardised, and must be administered uniformly to ensure the integrity and fairness of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations.

Candidate Registration

In order to prevent any late registrations, it is advisable to get your registrations ready at least one month prior to the closing date, so that you have enough time to check them thoroughly and to make any amendments before the deadline date.

SACAI accepts registrations for the NSC from full-time, part-time, and repeat candidates.

- Candidates must meet one of the following entrance requirements for Grade 10:
 - A Grade 9 school report indicating promotion to Grade 10,
 - A General Education and Training Certificate (GETC),
 - An NQF Level 1 Certificate, or
 - An equivalent qualification at NQF Level 1.

Registration Deadlines

- **October/November examinations:** Closing date **13 March**.
- **May/June examinations:** Closing date **28 February**.
- Late registrations will not be accepted without written approval from the SACAI Chief Executive Officer.

Accommodations and Concessions for Candidates

Concessions are pre-exam arrangements made on behalf of a candidate with particular needs. For example, if a candidate needs the use of a scribe or will need extra time, then accommodations need to be made in advance.

There are different categories of learning disabilities for which accommodations and concessions may be granted. Application forms and deadlines are in place in order to ensure that our examinations are fair to any candidate, irrespective of his or her ability or disability. No grade 12 candidate will be allowed to apply for an accommodation in the grade 12-year. SACAI will only assist with conversions and ad hoc applications.

If you have any candidates with learning barriers who wish to be assessed by SACAI, please make sure these difficulties are indicated when completing the learner registration form.

1. Learners with Barriers to Learning

- Institutions must apply for concessions on behalf of learners, as early as possible, using the official SACAI Accommodations Form.
- Applications must include full supporting documentation and medical or psychological reports.
- The SACAI Accommodations Committee will review all applications.

2. Immigrant Candidates

- Must provide documentation proving their status as defined by DBE regulations.
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5. UPLOADING AND CONFIRMING EXAM REGISTRATIONS

1. Upload the learner registrations on the SACAI Examination Management System.
2. Review and confirm candidate data for correctness.
3. Ensure that accommodations and concessions are correctly recorded.
4. Confirm the final list of registered candidates before the closing date.

It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that the registration information for both the examination centre and candidates, which they intend to register, is correct when it is submitted to SACAI.

Verification of Details

Proof of registration (Pre-registration forms) will be sent to clients within the month following the registration closing date.

- SACAI issues proof of registration reports to all institutions for verification.
- Institutions must confirm the accuracy of candidate details (names, ID numbers, subjects) within two weeks of receiving the proof.
- Any amendments must be submitted before the final confirmation deadline.

Thereafter, venue allocations are finalised and entry schedules issued to the institutions. Entry schedules require each candidate and their parent/guardian to sign (where applicable) as confirmation that their details are accurate. We recommend that each institution gets the candidates to participate in the verification process by checking their names, surnames and identity numbers.

The completion of schooling for Grade 10 and Grade 11 years is of utmost importance as this will assist the candidate, to some degree, with covering the content that needs to be understood before commencing Grade 12.

It is imperative that candidates who want to write the NSC Examinations should be thoroughly prepared, both in terms of what is expected in the examination, as well as having the necessary skills to cope with the demands and stress of writing an external examination.

Institutions must ensure all candidates are prepared for external examinations and understand SACAI's policies on conduct, invigilation, and irregularities.

6. EXAM CENTRE REGISTRATION AND COMPLIANCE

Registration as an Examination Centre

To be registered as a SACAI examination centre, the institution must:

- Be registered as an independent school with the relevant Provincial Education Department,
- Be accredited by Umalusi, and
- Meet SACAI's minimum facility and security standards.

Each centre must have:

- Suitable examination venues with adequate lighting, ventilation, and seating,
- A secure storage facility or safe for examination materials,
- Adequate toilet facilities,
- Trained invigilators and relief invigilators,
- Access to technology and communication systems.

Annual Renewal

All institutions must renew registration annually by completing the re-registration form and paying the non-refundable registration fee.

Deregistration

Institutions may be deregistered if they:

- Fail to meet financial or administrative obligations,
 - Breach security or integrity standards, or
 - Are implicated in serious irregularities.
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7. PRINTING, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTION PAPERS

- All NSC question papers are developed, moderated, printed, and distributed under strict security.
- Printing is done in line with SACAI's Examination Management Plan (EMP).
- Each exam writing centre receives papers in tamper-proof packaging containing:
 - The correct number of papers per subject,
 - Attendance registers, and
 - Return bags for scripts.

Important:

Do not open tamper-proof bags before the examination. The Chief Invigilator must verify the contents at least 30 minutes before the exam, in full view of candidates.

All question papers must be stored securely in a strong room or safe with limited access.

8. BEFORE THE EXAM

Invigilator Training

- All invigilators and chief invigilators must complete SACAI-approved invigilation training before examinations.
- Invigilators must:
 - Sign confidentiality declarations,
 - Be trained in irregularity reporting, and
 - Understand the procedures for distributing and collecting scripts.

Preparing the Examination Venue

- Desks must be placed at least one metre apart.
- No instructional materials may be visible.
- A wall clock and visible start and end times must be displayed.
- Restrooms must be clean and checked for irregularities.

Pre-Examination Meeting

A pre-exam briefing is recommended to review:

- Examination rules and conduct,
- Procedures for identification and entry,
- Allowable items (stationery, calculators, etc.), and
- Procedures for emergencies or disruptions.

Candidate Admission Letters and Seating Plans

- Candidates must bring a valid exam admission letter and ID document.
- Seating plans must be arranged in numerical order and displayed outside the venue.
- Copies of seating plans must be submitted with exam scripts after each session.

9. EXAM DAY

Commencing the Exam

1. Verify candidate identity and admission letters.
2. Read the examination rules aloud.
3. Open the question paper package in front of the candidates.
4. Allow 10 minutes of reading time before starting the examination.

Cell phones and electronic devices are strictly prohibited.

During the Exam

- Invigilators must maintain silence and supervision.
- Only one invigilator per 30 candidates is permitted.
- Any irregularities must be reported immediately on the Irregularity Report Form.
- SACAI and Umalusi monitors may visit unannounced: cooperation is required at all times.

Concluding the Exam

- Scripts must be collected one candidate at a time.
 - No candidate may leave until all scripts are collected.
 - Scripts, attendance registers, and irregularity reports must be packed in return bags.
 - The Chief Invigilator must complete the Daily Examination Report and submit it within two hours after the completion of the exam.
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10. AFTER THE EXAM

Secure Return of Scripts

- Scripts must be couriered to SACAI within the stipulated timeframes.
- Late submission of scripts is not permissible as this constitutes an irregularity.
- All written and unwritten (empty) answer books must be returned.

Post-Exam Monitoring

- SACAI monitors review compliance with examination procedures and reports findings to the SACAI.
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11. MARKING AND MODERATION

Marking Centre Operations

- Marking is conducted at a centralised venue under strict security.
- Markers, moderators, and assistants must be appointed in writing and sign confidentiality declarations.
- Only qualified subject specialists are contracted to mark NSC scripts.

Marking Guideline Discussions

- Chief Markers and Internal Moderators lead discussions before marking begins.
- Dummy scripts are used to ensure uniform application of marking guidelines
- Marking Guidelines are then finalised and approved under the supervision of Umalusi.

Moderation

- A minimum of 10% of scripts per subject must be moderated.
- Internal Moderators verify marking accuracy, totals, and adherence to guidelines.
- Umalusi conducts external moderation of scripts.

Marking Control and Security

- All scripts are tracked using log sheets and control checklists.
 - Scripts are stored in a strong room for six months after certification before being destroyed securely.
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12. IRREGULARITIES AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

SACAI applies a zero-tolerance approach to all irregularities.

Examples of Irregularities but not limited to:

- Possession of unauthorised material,
- Copying or helping another candidate,
- Using electronic devices,
- Misconduct or disturbances in the venue,
- Opening papers prematurely,
- Dishonesty by examination officials.

Actions Taken

- Marks declared null and void,
- Temporary or permanent bans from future exams,
- Criminal charges (where applicable),
- Deregistration of centres for repeated offences.

All irregularities are investigated by the SACAI Irregularities Committee (including an Umalusi representative).

13. RESULTING AND CERTIFICATION

Resulting Process

- Marks are captured by two data capturers.
- Results are verified, standardised, and approved by Umalusi.
- Statements of results are released on the official SACAI results release date.

Scale of Achievement

Level	Percentage	Description
7	80–100%	Outstanding achievement
6	70–79%	Meritorious achievement
5	60–69%	Substantial achievement
4	50–59%	Adequate achievement
3	40–49%	Moderate achievement
2	30–39%	Elementary achievement
1	0–29%	Not achieved

Certification

- Umalusi is the sole authority for issuing the National Senior Certificate.
- Certificates are issued approximately six months after the release of results.
- Replacement or re-issue of certificates must be applied for through SACAI.

Re-marking, Re-checking and Viewing of Scripts

- Candidates may apply within 14 days after results release.
 - Fees apply as published in the SACAI fee schedule.
 - Requests must be submitted via the registered institution.
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14. DOCUMENTS TO SUCCESSFULLY ADMINISTER NSC EXAMINATIONS

Centres must ensure the following documents are available and up to date:

- Centre Examination Management File (supplied by SACAI)
- Invigilation Attendance Registers
- Irregularity Report Forms
- Seating Plans and Daily Examination Reports
- Scripts Return Register and Courier Waybills
- Invigilator Training Certificates
- Emergency Contact List and Examination Timetable

All documents must be filed neatly and made available for inspection by SACAI or Umalusi officials.

15. CONTACT US

SACAI

South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute

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